



*** Tips For * Nursing Mothers**

First Few Days



The first few days after your baby's birth is a time to get to know each other. Babies are not able to talk when they are born so you have to learn a new language. You must learn how to read your baby's cues.

Mothering is learning to give meaning to your baby's cues and to respond in the right way to meet your baby's needs. Your baby's basic trust of the world comes from his dealings with you. If you can read your baby's cues and meet his needs, he begins to trust his new world.

The baby language of breastfeeding:

- **Cues** - Your baby will tell you when he is hungry by giving feeding cues. Early feeding cues are sucking on lips, tongue, finger and/or fist; rooting; and/or fidgeting. Late feeding cues are fussing and crying. Feed your baby as soon as you notice his feeding cues. Don't wait until he cries. Responding to early feeding cues helps your baby gain weight faster and helps you make plenty of milk. It's okay to offer your breast every time your baby tells you he is hungry, even if it's only been thirty minutes since he last nursed. Newborns have a tiny stomach (about the size of a golf ball) and breastmilk is digested quickly (1 - 1 1/2 hours). As your baby gets older, he will go longer between feedings.

- **Holding Your Baby for Feeding** - Once your baby tells you he is hungry, place your baby at your breast so he can latch-on and nurse. Hold your baby close to you with his mouth in line with your nipple and his body facing your body. Your baby's ear, shoulder,

and hip should form a straight line. Support your baby's body so he can focus on nursing.

- **Latch-on** - Offer your breast to your



baby. Wait until his mouth is wide open (like a yawn) and place your breast in his mouth. Your baby should have the nipple and about an inch of the areola (dark area around the

nipple) in his mouth. His mouth should be centered around your nipple. His nose and chin should touch your breast. You can tell your baby is latched-on well if: his lips are flanged (lips turned out not tucked in), you can see your baby's tongue under your breast if you gently pull his bottom lip down, your baby's ears wiggle when nursing, and you can see a circular movement of your baby's jaw.

- **Milk Transfer** - If your baby is positioned and latched-on well, milk should transfer from your breast to your baby. You can tell your baby is getting milk if you hear him swallowing, if you see milk leaking from your other breast, and if you see milk dribbling out of your baby's mouth.

- **Ending** - Your baby will tell you when he is finished nursing by "falling off" the breast with a satisfied look on his face. You can then burp your baby and offer the other breast. If your baby is full, offer the second breast first at the next feeding.

Things that can help new moms learn their baby's cues:

- **Skin-to-skin Contact** - Hold your baby (stripped down to a diaper) against your bare chest (under your shirt or nightgown). Studies show that babies held skin-to-skin cry less and moms learn to meet their needs more quickly. This is also a good way for dad to bond with his new baby.
- **Rooming-in** - Keep your baby in your room while you are in the hospital instead of putting him in the nursery. You can watch your baby and nurse when he tells you he is hungry.
- **Baby Slings and Carriers** - Babies who are carried rather than put down cry less. Carrying the baby helps mom and dad learn their baby's cues.

Things that keep mothers from learning their baby's cues:

- Being away from your baby. New moms and dads need to be with their baby as much as possible.
- Using pacifiers. Pacifiers interfere with your baby's cues. Sucking is one of the ways your baby tells you he is hungry. Don't routinely give your baby a pacifier until breastfeeding is well established - about six weeks.
- Listening to other people's advice rather than following your instincts.

- Having a lot of visitors. It's hard to get to know your baby when your home is full of company. Limit visitors the first few weeks. Spend this time getting to know your baby. There will be plenty of time for family and friends to meet your new baby.

Mothering Mom:

Mom needs to be mothered when she has a new baby. Dad, family, and friends need to take care of the cooking, cleaning, shopping for groceries, and caring for the older children so mom can focus on the new baby.

Building Trust:

Don't worry about spoiling your baby. A baby who can trust his mother (and family) to read his cues and meet his needs is a much happier, better adjusted, more independent child later on.

If you have any breastfeeding questions, contact your local:

WIC Breastfeeding Counselor:

La Leche League Leader:

Lactation Consultant:
